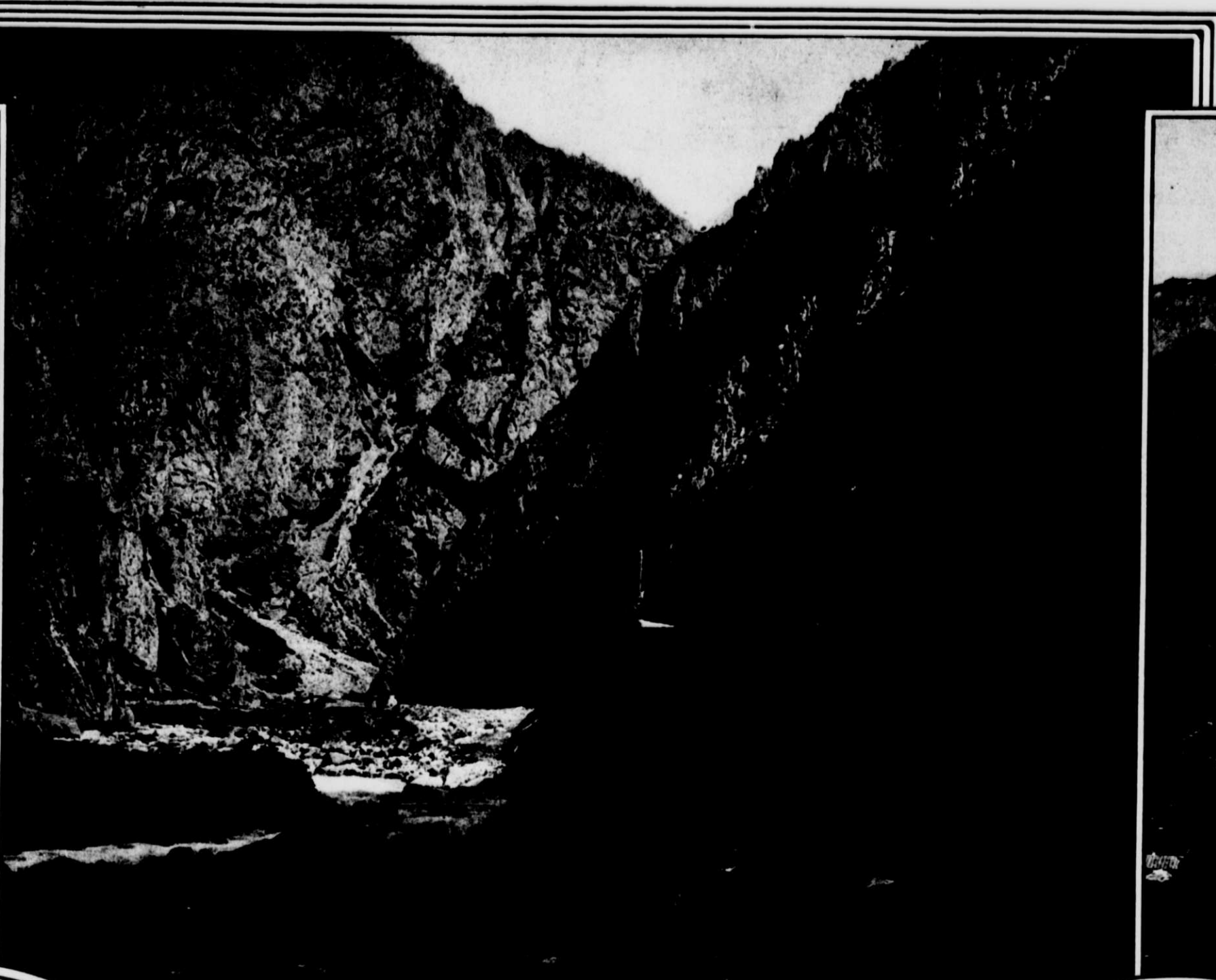


RUSSIA'S MILITARY ROAD TO TURKEY



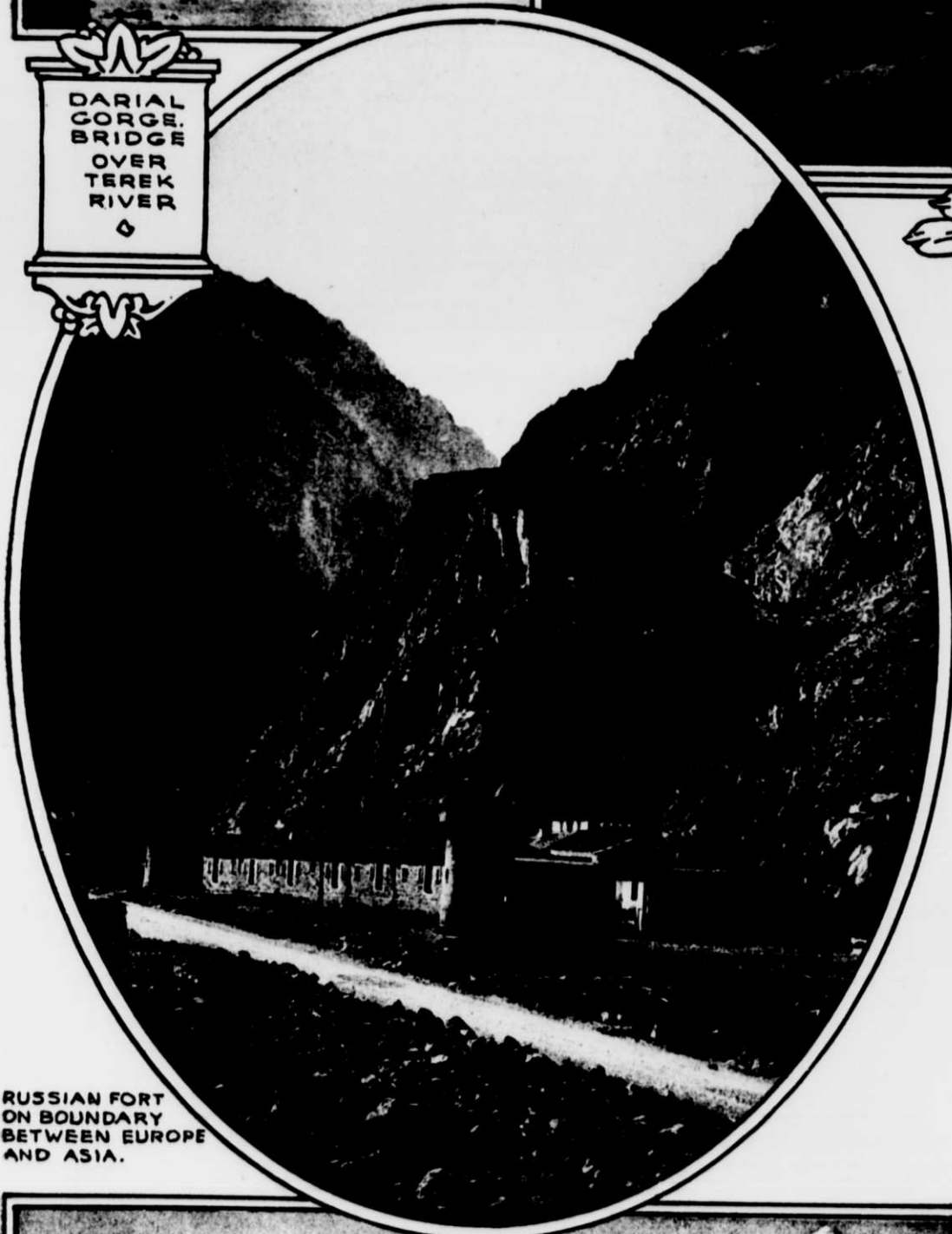
DARIAL GORGE.
BRIDGE
OVER
TEREK
RIVER



THE
DARIAL
PASS



MOUNT
KASBEK
IN THE
DISTANCE



RUSSIAN FORT
ON BOUNDARY
BETWEEN EUROPE
AND ASIA.

THE feats of Hannibal in crossing the Alps have been quite outclassed by the persistence of the Russians in pushing their way through the snow heaped passes of the Carpathians. Because of the numbers engaged in this feat of operations, the immediate menace to Austria-Hungary of the fighting here and the ultimate peril to Berlin the public has scarcely heeded the Russian campaign in the Trans-Caucasian region against the Turks. And yet the Czar's forces have had to contend there with nature in her grimmest mood in order to hasten southward against the Sultan's troops.

The Turks have offered battle not only along their own northeastern frontier adjacent to Trans-Caucasia, but they have advanced even into the enemy's territory, and the left flank of the Sultan's divisions has been heretofore supported by the activities of the Turkish squadrons in the Black Sea. Thus the natural and easiest route of Russian transports has been blocked or hampered by the Ottoman ships of war. Accordingly the Czar's soldiers have had to follow an overland route to reach Trans-Caucasia and thence to move further southward into Asiatic Turkey. Their trail has been over the Georgian military road, which mounts nearly 8,000 feet skyward in climbing across the formidable Caucasian range.

A map of the region in question will show that the Caucasian range is flanked by substantially parallel railroads, running on the north and south side of the mountains. Reaching from Vladikafkaz on the north to Tiflis on the south is the Georgian military road over which traffic is conducted by means of horses because the grades are too much for the steam locomotive. At times on the way as many as eight horses are hitched to the post coaches in order to negotiate the climb. The toll of the ascent alternates with the hazards of the downward trail and the dangers of the sharp turns and the tremendous declivities along which the highway skirts at times.

Until a little over a hundred years ago the barbaric, freebooting mountaineers dominated the pass, but then the Russian Government took things in hand and began the building of the present road, which opened the route to wheeled vehicles, frequent military stations providing the needful safeguard to travellers and points where relays of horses could be had. The route from Vladikafkaz to Tiflis by way of the Darial Pass is a matter of a little short of 133 miles.

According to Annette M. B. Meakin, in her book on Russia, "The Georgian military road is divided into twelve stages, beginning at Tiflis, in Asia, and ending at Vladikafkaz, in Europe.

The seventh post station is Mleta, in the valley of the Aragva, 4,961 feet above the sea, and set where the forest covered mountains grow balder and push their summits skyward bare and razorlike, amid a general setting of increasing wildness. From Mleta to the next post station, at Goudaour, a distance of less than ten miles, the road zigzags back and forth interminably as it climbs the intervening altitude of a little short of 3,000 feet. Goudaour is 7,957 feet above sea level, and there, according to Miss Meakin, "the mountain tops were covered with snow; deep and gloomy ravines, jagged cliffs, a valley of mountains, a sea of rocks and tents" opened before the eye.

At the ninth post station, on the way to Vladikafkaz, is Kobe, 6,570 feet in the air, and between Kobe and the next station of Kasbek is the Darial Pass, "which, cut in the rocky mountainside, skirts the wide valley of the River Terek. It is a gloomy and impressive bit of scenery. Bare black rocks hang out over us as we round a dizzy corner and below, far down in the valley, the River Terek gurgles like a tiny stream." Here it is that Mount Kasbek, snowclad and sheer in its abrupt rise, reaches heavenward to a height of 16,593 feet.

The Georgian road is an engineering achievement of the first order, and it is now repaying Russia for all she has spent upon it in the past, for to-day many corps of the hardest and best of her soldiers are pouring in a steady stream southward against their ancient enemies the Turks.



ROAD UP
FROM MLETA
TO GOUDAOUR
LATTER SHOWN
IN DISTANCE



POST COACH AT TOP OF THE PASS



THE POST STATION AT MLETA